



"Our nations share more than a commitment to our common security – we share a set of common democratic values. That is why the bond that links us together cannot be broken, and why NATO is a unique alliance in the history of the world. Now it falls to us to work together to face down the perils of this moment in history, while seizing its promise."

President–Elect Barack Obama's letter to NATO, January 20, 2009

The Truman Doctrine



President Truman addressing Congress on March 12, 1947.

Courtesy Harry S. Truman Library and Museum

1947 On March 12, 1947, President Harry Truman asked the U.S. Congress for aid to Greece and Turkey. Britain was about to end its financial and military aid, and the ongoing Civil War in Greece threatened regional stability. The ideas expounded in President Truman's speech would later become known as the Truman Doctrine and marked a major shift in American foreign policy, committing the U.S. "to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."



LINKS: [Speech on Recommendation for Assistance to Greece and Turkey](#)

[Background on the Truman Doctrine](#)

[Truman Library](#)

The Marshall Plan

"Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos."

Secretary of State George Marshall, June 5, 1947



An English family receiving a package from the humanitarian organization CARE. As part of the Marshall plan, U.S. ships carried private donations to Europe free of charge.
Courtesy Library of Congress

1948

On April 3, 1948, President Truman signed the Economic Cooperation Act of 1948, more commonly known as the Marshall Plan. The legislation and the body it created, the Economic Cooperation Administration, were crucial to helping Europe rebuild after World War II. Over the next four years, \$13.3 billion would be spent, leading to unprecedented economic growth across Western Europe. The funds went to staples, such as food and gasoline, as well as manufacturing and agricultural inputs needed to rebuild key industries.

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The Berlin Airlift



West Berliners watching American cargo planes during the Berlin Airlift.

Courtesy Air Mobility Command website

1948

The Berlin Airlift, which lasted from June 27, 1948 to May 12, 1949, was a coordinated Allied operation in response to the Soviet blockade of road and rail routes into West Berlin. The American-led effort brought much needed supplies, such as food, medicine, and fuel, by plane to citizens of Berlin, preventing the starvation of millions.

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The Origins of NATO



First NATO Headquarters at Palais de Chaillot in Paris.

Courtesy NATO Photos.

1948

Recognizing the growing threat of the Soviet Union, a European mutual defense pact, the Brussels Treaty, was signed in March 1948 by Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Shortly after the signing, negotiations for a Trans-Atlantic pact began among American, Canadian, and British officials, though negotiations soon expanded to include other Western powers. In June, the U.S. Congress passed the Vandenberg Resolution, advising President Truman to seek a mutual defense agreement with allies. All of these events paved the way for the Washington Treaty the following year.

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LINKS: [Text of the Vandenberg Resolution](#) [More on the Origins of NATO](#) [Secretary of State Acheson's Speech on NATO](#)

The Washington Treaty



President Harry S. Truman observing the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty by Secretary of State Dean Acheson. *Courtesy NATO Photos*

1949

On April 4, 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty, also known as the Washington Treaty, was signed in Washington, DC. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was founded as a way for the democracies of the United States, Canada, and Western Europe to provide for their common security. The Treaty, though only a few pages long, has provided an enduring framework for the Alliance. The core of the Treaty is Article 5, which commits the Allies to consider an attack against any one Member as an attack against all.

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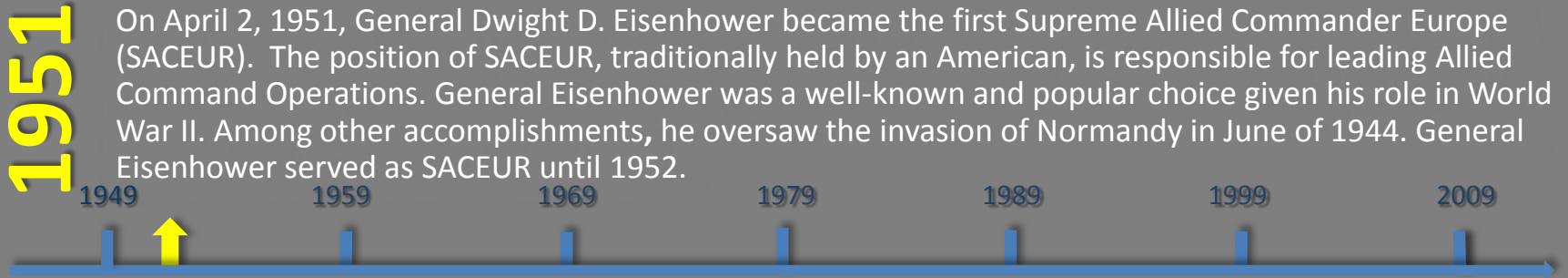
2009

LINKS: [Text of Washington Treaty](#) [Photos of the Treaty Signing](#) [Photos of the first Meeting of the North Atlantic Council](#)
[NATO: The First Five Years](#)

General Eisenhower Becomes First Supreme Allied Commander



President Truman and General Eisenhower in 1951.
Courtesy Dwight D. Eisenhower Library



President Kennedy and the Cold War

"The Atlantic Community, as we know it, has been built in response to challenge: the challenge of European chaos in 1947, of the Berlin blockade in 1948, the challenge of Communist aggression in Korea in 1950. Now, standing strong and prosperous, after an unprecedented decade of progress, the Atlantic Community will not forget either its history or the principles which gave it meaning"

President Kennedy's Speech on Berlin Crisis, July 25, 1961



President Kennedy speaking in West Berlin on June 26, 1963.
Courtesy John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum

1961

President John F. Kennedy's term in office coincided with an important time in Cold War history, including the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. President Kennedy's strong commitment to Europe, especially the people of Berlin, made him an extremely popular figure in Germany as evidenced by the large number of people who gathered to hear him speak in front of the Brandenburg Gate in June of 1963.

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LINKS: [President Kennedy's speech on the Berlin Crisis](#) [John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum](#)
[President Kennedy's "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech: background and multimedia](#)

The Helsinki Accords



President Gerald Ford signing the Final Act in 1975. *Courtesy Gerald R. Ford Library*

1975

The 1960s and 1970s saw an increase in cooperation between the Warsaw Pact and NATO. This improvement in relations is embodied by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The conference and its seminal document, the Helsinki Final Act, or the Helsinki Accords, dealt with political-military, economic and human rights issues. The Final Act, which was signed in 1975 by 35 nations, helped to increase cooperation between Eastern Europe and the West, and helped to protect human rights. The processes established by the Final Act, for example, allowed activists monitor of human rights abuses and hold violators accountable.

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LINKS: [Background on The Helsinki Final Act](#)

[Text of the Helsinki Final Act](#)

The Fall of the Berlin Wall



Reagan speaking in front of the Brandenburg Gate in 1987.

Courtesy Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Library

1989

After World War II, Germany was divided. West Germany joined NATO in 1955 while the Soviet Union still occupied East Germany. West Berlin was an island of freedom within East Germany, with the Soviet-erected Berlin Wall dividing the city. President Reagan's 1987 call upon Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to "tear down this wall" was one of the most memorable speeches leading to the end of the Cold War. The Berlin Wall fell on November 9, 1989, leading to the reunification of Germany and symbolizing the great changes that were occurring across Eastern Europe at that time.

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LINKS: [Transcript of Reagan's Speech at Brandenburg Gate](#) [Audio of Speech](#) [The Fall of Communism in Eastern Europe](#)

Bosnia



A NATO SFOR soldier in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Courtesy "The SFOR Informer"

1993

NATO first began work in Bosnia in 1993, helping to maintain a UN-established no fly zone with Operation Deny Flight. NATO increased its involvement in August 1995 through Operation Deliberate Force. The air campaign helped bring an end to the three-year-old conflict there and paved the way for the 1995 signing of the Dayton Peace Accord that laid out a new government structure to give equal status to each of Bosnia and Herzegovina's three major ethnic groups. To help implement the Dayton Agreement, NATO sent an Implementation Force (IFOR), its first ever peace-keeping force. IFOR was replaced by a Stabilization Force (SFOR), which from 1996 to 2005 helped to further stabilize and maintain the peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was replaced by Operation Althea, led by the European Union.

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LINKS: [SFOR](#)

Partnership for Peace



Ukrainian soldiers during first PFP exercise on Allied soil, Operation Cooperative Spirit 94.

Courtesy NATO Photos

1994

Since 1991, NATO has increasingly worked with non-NATO countries, particularly newly independent states, on issues of mutual interest. The establishment of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) Program in 1994 led to even further cooperation and dialogue through formal frameworks, individualized to meet each country's needs. Examples of cooperation include defense reform, education and training, and crisis management. There are currently 24 partner countries, and several current members of NATO, such as the Czech Republic, are former PfP countries.

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LINKS: [Partnership for Peace Program](#)

Partnerships Beyond Europe: Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative



NATO Security Seminar in Algeria (June 2008). *Courtesy NATO Photos*

1994

Launched in 1994, the Mediterranean Dialogue seeks to increase communication and cooperation among NATO and the Mediterranean countries through workshops, political consultations and other activities. There are currently seven non-NATO members in the Dialogue: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), launched in 2004, has a similar mission, but focuses on bilateral cooperation between NATO members and countries in the broader Middle East. Four countries have joined the ICI: Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. ICI countries cooperate with NATO in a variety of areas including the fight against terrorism, defense reform and border security.

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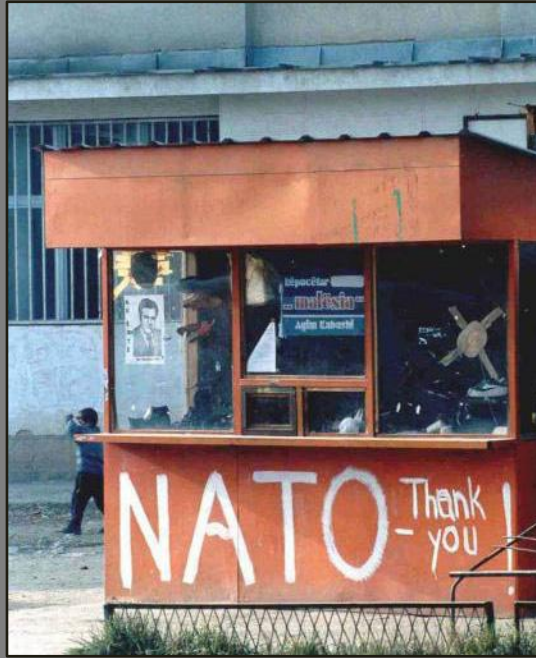
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LINKS: [The Mediterranean Dialogue](#)

[The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative](#)

Kosovo



An abandoned kiosk in Kosovo. *Courtesy Kosovo Force website*

1999

After more than a year of fighting in Kosovo and two failed rounds of peace talks, NATO began a limited air campaign, Operation Allied Force, in March of 1999 to stop ethnic cleansing. The campaign ended in June, with Yugoslav forces withdrawing from Kosovo. Soon after, NATO sent a large force, KFOR, authorized by UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which placed Kosovo under interim UN control. KFOR's work continues to this day, while the European Union's Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) has an increasingly important role.

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50th Anniversary of NATO



Courtesy NATO Photos

1999 NATO's 50th Anniversary Summit was held in April 1999 in Constitution Hall in Washington, DC – the site of the original signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949. Although the Alliance was larger, having grown to nineteen members from the original twelve, its ideals of solidarity, security and freedom, remained the same. The mood of the Summit was somber, tempered by the ongoing operations in Kosovo.

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LINKS: [Washington Summit Information \(NATO\)](#) [Washington Summit Information \(State Department\)](#)

September 11, 2001



NATO Ambassadors pay silent tribute to the victims of the September 11th attacks on September 14, 2001.

Courtesy NATO Photos

2001

The only time NATO has ever invoked the “Article 5” collective defense commitment was on September 12, 2001 when the Allies came together in support of the United States following the terrorist attacks on New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. Article 5 states that an attack against any one member is treated as an attack against all – the core of NATO’s collective defense framework.

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LINKS: [The 9-11 Commission](#) [Flight 93 National Memorial](#) [The Artists Registry at the National September 11 Memorial Museum](#)
[Washington Post Interactive Feature on the Pentagon Memorial](#)

Afghanistan: Security and Stability



Courtesy U.S. Army Photos

2001 The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is a multinational force formed in 2001 to help stabilize Afghanistan. Though ISAF was initially established by the United Nations, NATO has increasingly played a more significant role. In early 2003, the North Atlantic Council decided to expand NATO's role in ISAF; NATO took over command and coordination of ISAF in August of that year. At the Bucharest Summit in 2008, the Alliance adopted a new Comprehensive Approach for Afghanistan that emphasizes a coordinated civilian-military strategy. Currently, there are troops from 41 nations serving in ISAF.

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Afghanistan: Reconstruction and Development



Courtesy U.S. Army Photos

2001 In the face of continuing attacks by Taliban extremists, NATO is helping the Afghan people rebuild a society after decades of war and persecution. Progress has been made in many areas, including government, education and health. In September 2005, Afghanistan held its first parliamentary elections in 30 years. Until the Taliban's rule, it was forbidden for girls to attend school. By 2008, over 2 million girls were enrolled in school in Afghanistan. In the field of health, there has been a 26% drop in child mortality since 2002, and over 670 clinics have been constructed or rehabilitated.

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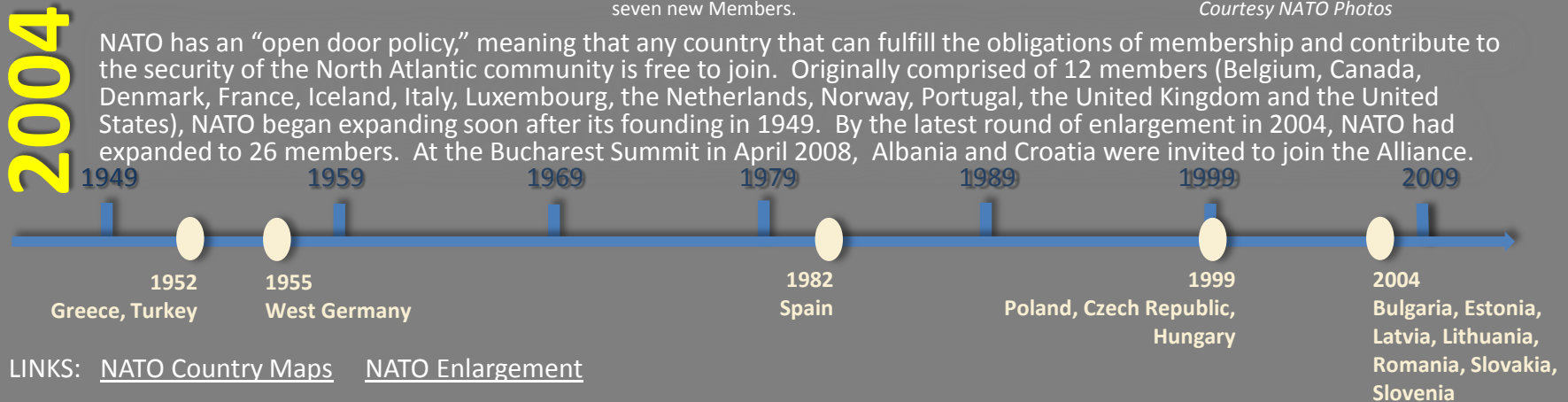
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NATO Enlargement



Flag Raising Ceremony at NATO headquarters on April 2, 2004 celebrating the accession of seven new Members.
Courtesy NATO Photos



Africa



Courtesy SHAPE Photos

2005

Since 2005, NATO has supported numerous African Union initiatives. Its support for the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS) marked NATO's first ever mission in Africa. More recently, NATO has provided airlift support to the AU mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and evaluated the African Standby Force (ASF)'s operational readiness.

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LINKS: [NATO Assistance to the African Union](#)

Humanitarian Missions



NATO Soldiers unloading humanitarian relief supplies on the U.S. Gulf Coast in 2005.

Courtesy SHAPE Photos

2005 In recent years, NATO's missions have expanded into new and important areas, including civil emergency response. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, 39 nations offered aid, including food supplies, bottled water, water purification units, medical supplies, tents and camp beds, generators, water pumps, ships, helicopters, and forensic teams. Similar efforts occurred in response to the devastating earthquakes in Pakistan and Turkey in 2005.

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Piracy



NATO ships off the coast of Somalia in 2008.

Courtesy NATO Photos

2008 At the request of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, NATO escorted World Food Program vessels safely to ports in Africa where they could off-load and distribute needed humanitarian relief. The mission, known as Operation Allied Provider, lasted from October to December 2008. Recently, NATO announced that it would send another NATO Maritime Group to the Gulf of Aden in early 2009. NATO is exploring long-term ways to fight piracy along with the European Union and other organizations.

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LINKS: [Operation Allied Provider](#) [Video of Operation Allied Provider](#)

Heading Toward NATO's 60th Anniversary Summit



Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates and the UN Special Representative for Afghanistan, Kai Eide, at the Defense Ministerial, Krakow, Poland, February 19, 2009. *Courtesy NATO Photos*

From April 3 -4, 2009, NATO will hold its 60th Anniversary Summit in Strasbourg, France and Kehl, Germany. The Summit, President Obama's first, will celebrate NATO's past achievements while looking to the future of NATO.

Please check our website periodically for more information on the Summit and other 60th anniversary events.

LINKS: [U.S. Mission to NATO website](#) [NATO's 60th Anniversary website](#) [NATO Summit Meetings](#)